

Cambodians

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U.S. Trains Cambodians Elsewhere

Defense Department officials yesterday confirmed reports that U.S. Special Forces were being used to help train Cambodian cadres at bases in Thailand and South Vietnam.

Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said he was "not aware of any plans" for a similar U.S. military training program to be carried on inside Cambodia. But he said such a move was not prohibited, in the Pentagon's view, by Congressional legislation barring American ground combat troops or advisers from Cambodia.

Friedheim emphasized that the Green Beret role was to help prepare Cambodians to train their own fledgling army, rather than to accompany the Cambodians in combat.

Nevertheless, Friedheim's remarks added still another category of U.S. military involvement in Cambodian affairs which the Pentagon views as legal under the Congressional restrictions.

Air Activities

At a Pentagon press conference last Wednesday, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird took the wraps off the use of virtually all types of American air power in Cambodia and said the Congressional restriction did not prohibit sending in such other non-combat units as communications centers, field hospitals or search and rescue teams.

Friedheim, yesterday, said American trainers, as distinguished from advisers, would fall into that same noncombat category, though he stressed "there was no intention or recommendation" to set up training programs inside Cambodia.

He also said the United States was trying to get South Vietnam and Thailand to take over as much of the training as possible.

Military spokesmen said the training was being done outside Cambodia to avoid the appearance of any large-scale U.S. ground combat involvement, and also because bases were already set up in neighboring countries.

Friedheim indicated the training had been going on for several months and was part of the U.S. military assistance program.

U.S. Monitors

Referring to delivery of American military equipment directly to the Cambodians, Friedheim said he "couldn't foreclose the possibility" that some U.S. embassy personnel in Phnom Penh assigned to monitor the aid effort might have to point out "where the on-and-off buttons are."

UPI, citing U.S. military sources, reported from Saigon yesterday that the Green Berets were training 2,100 Cambodians in guerrilla tactics at bases in Thailand, South Vietnam and Laos for use against Communist supply lines in northeast Cambodia.

The operation, these sources said, are being patterned after those of a 25,000-man guerrilla army that the CIA has recruited, financed, armed and operated in Laos for several years.

UPI reported that the United States is planning to drop teams of Cambodians into the underpopulated northeast, where Communist supply lines running into South Vietnam are vulnerable to hit-and-run attacks.